

By Srinath Fernando

WITH the current price of a barrel of oil reaching its highest level of US\$ 140+, a conflict in the Persian Gulf would inevitably cause the price of oil to reach unimaginable heights. The parties to the conflict would not feel the pinch but the less developed and developing countries such as ours with a huge structure of public officials would be in for a crisis, against which no action plan is in place or in sight.

The government is increasingly becoming deaf and blind to the public outcry for trimming the jumbo cabinet of 110+ ministers and advisors.

On July 31, 2006, the UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment programme followed by a further resolution calling for tighter sanctions. But Iran remained steadfast and undaunted by the demands. The diplomacy of the E3+3 (UK, France, Germany and US, Russia and China) has not yet been able to work out a diplomatic solution to the crisis. One school of thought argued that Iran was simply bidding time to carve out an economic package from the West in a bid to organise the crippling domestic economy.

Secret plan

But protracted negotiations, despite having offered incentive packages for Iran, seem to indicate that Iran is in fact on a secret path to dominate the region and wielding a nuclear device in the future would further strengthen the image of Iran and probably threaten the other Arab countries in the region.

Iran has conducted massive war games and is in the process of upgrading its armed forces. The US has facilities in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE and Oman. Qatar provides the headquarters for the US Central Command which is only few minutes from the Iranian



Mahmoud Ahmedinejad

The situation reached a new dimension when Ex-Deputy Chief of MOSSAD, Shabtai Shavit, an influential adviser to the Israeli Parliament's Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee, told *The London Telegraph* that Iran is only one year away from acquiring nuclear capability and time was running out to prevent Iran's leaders getting the bomb.

However, one British Foreign Office report indicated that "although technological constraints are likely to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, if that is its intention, there is nevertheless a strong possibility

that it could establish a "breakout" nuclear weapons capability by 2015." This statement is in contrast to the statement by the Ex Deputy Chief of Mossad.

If any future US government comes under pressure to withdraw US forces from Iraq, Israel would have a tactical setback and perhaps the underlying rational of Mossad's Ex-Chief maybe that if Israel waits longer for action, the more difficult it would be for Israel to attack Iran, given the unpredictable political and strategic balance by then.

Israel has demonstrated daring military strikes in Uganda, Tunisia

If Iran does not suspend its nuclear enrichment, a military conflict in the Persian Gulf would be unavoidable and it would bring misery and chaos to countries who depend solely on the Middle East for their oil supplies. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, what we need is a plan to secure oil supplies to Sri Lanka and to have an action plan to cut down wastage and extravagance in public expenditure, and rationalise the government machinery. Above all there should be a political will to brace for such a situation



Ehud Olmert

and Iraq, and takes tough action... its security is threatened. Israel even attacked a US spy ship during the Arab Israel Six Day War. It would be naive to believe that Israel would sit idle when Iran is secretly developing a nuclear device with capability to deliver it to Israel.

Utterances

Israel's determination to attack Iran is bolstered by the inflammatory utterances made by the Iranian President Ahmedinejad that Israel must be wiped out from the world map. In addition to that Iran is said to have provided logistical, moral and military aid to terrorist organisations in Leba-

Uzbekistan etc.) have secondary alliances with the US.

Afghanistan and Pakistan military arrangements purely for the war on terrorism would require the US to find Iran's ability to retaliate would entail taking out a missiles, missile sites, command and control centres, and objects of retaliatory military capability.

US ships in the Persian Gulf would be at grave risk as I acquired Chinese made Silkworm anti ship missiles. Even if strikes back at US military installations, it would inevitably lead the US to target oil installations thwart shipping in the Persian Gulf.

Unilateral action

What would happen if Israel sorts to unilateral action against Iran? Would the US provide passage for Israeli attack aircraft cross the skies of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq? Would it take a different form? Israel is said to have acquired some German cruise made submarines and some reports indicate that it can deliver nuclear tipped missiles.

US and Israel have a number of strategic and military alliances in place and the US has put Israel under a missile defence shield. If Iran does not suspend its nuclear enrichment, a military conflict in the Persian Gulf would be unavoidable and it would bring misery and chaos to countries who depend solely on the Middle East for their oil supplies.

Iranian diplomats have also been implicated in the bomb attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. A clear manifestation of a regime in support of terrorism world wide. Ironically Sri Lanka is fighting the world's most ruthless terrorist group but have isolated traditional allies such as the US, UK and Europe and have allied with Iran.

On the ground the military situation is undoubtedly more in favour of the US. Iraq is under US military command and some of the Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan,

This has worrying consequences. Democratic change) enjoy duty-free access

Iran nuclear crisis: Would Israel strike first?

A war president